

“I’LL BE OUT OF THE OFFICE FROM...”

Most of us who write for and read *Park Science* spend the majority of our time in the office. I suspect that what once attracted us to our professions in park research or resource management was the expectation of working—at least part of the time—in the great outdoors of the national parks, an ideal as potent for some as the calling to preserve the magnificence of the National Park System. In reality, we balance these two worlds, conducting experiments or carrying out resource management projects in the field, and enjoying the productivity afforded by the office environment where we synthesize data from fieldwork, organize staffs for field projects, collaborate with colleagues, advance partnerships, or simply take care of administrative details.



In my job I have the great pleasure of engaging daily in the telling of fascinating stories of research and resource management throughout the National Park System. I cross paths with hundreds of park employees and researchers each year. Yet I do almost all of this work in the office—in front of a computer monitor, beside a phone, next to a row of reference books. Seldom as they are, days that I spend in a national park are vital experiences that deepen my understanding of these special places and strengthen my connection with them.

Late last June I enjoyed a day in the field with more than 100 NPS colleagues from the Natural Resource Program Center and the Office of the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science when we met in Rocky Mountain National Park to assist with several resource management projects. My crew’s task was to remove musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*), an invasive plant species, from a forested area east of the Continental Divide. With the ground soft from a week of rain, we tore after the invaders, and by day’s end had pulled hundreds of the prickly plants from the ground. Although it was only one day in the field, it was a day that produced real results in a short period of time. I felt refreshed to be out of the office working alongside colleagues and new acquaintances and giving the park a boost with a daunting job.

Like my simple outing pulling weeds, the articles in this issue demonstrate tangible results of fieldwork, application of technical skills, and direct involvement with the care of park resources. Yet fieldwork eventually comes to an end, and meaningful articles come about only through the extra effort of the authors, usually made in the office, to distill the results and organize them in a useful format for others to contemplate and absorb. As you read the articles here, I hope you will consider writing up a report of a science-based project, long or short, that’s important to you and the management of your park’s resources and submit it for publication so that others might learn from your experience. Please contact me if you are interested.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Park Science* wherever you are—in your office or out in the field.

Jeff Selbach
Editor